Schlesinger "Robert Kennedy"

HAVE BEEN FOR YOUR COUNTRY. YOUR BROTHER WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY PROUD OF THE STRENGTH YOU HAVE SHOWN. AS THE NEW YEAR BEGINS, I RESOLVE TO DO MY BEST TO FULFILL HIS TRUST IN ME. I WILL NEED YOUR COUNSEL AND SUPPORT.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Kennedy replied from Aspen, Colorado, two days later:

GREATLY APPRECIATE THE THOUGHTFULNESS OF YOUR TELEGRAM. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO VISITING YOU IN WASHINGTON AT YOUR CONVENIENCE. RESPECTFULLY

ROBERT F. KENNEDY [40]

IV

No one acted more expeditiously to emphasize Robert Kennedy's change of fortune than J. Edgar Hoover.

Hoover and Johnson had been Washington neighbors and friends for many years. They understood each other. Shortly after the assassination, the direct line from the Attorney General that Kennedy in another age had instructed Hoover to answer personally rang on the director's desk. "Mr. Hoover," an FBI agent recalled, "didn't answer it, so everyone tried to ignore it. When it finally stopped, Mr. Hoover said, 'Put that damn thing back on Miss Gandy's desk where it belongs.'" [41] The director replaced Kennedy's friend Courtney Evans by the obsequious Cartha DeLoach as the FBI liaison with the White House. Walter Jenkins, a Johnson special assistant (whose brother was an FBI agent), replaced O'Donnell as the FBI contact. The Attorney General's office was cut out of the chain. When Dolan warned Kennedy that the Bureau was back to its old trick of dealing directly with the White House, Kennedy smiled wryly and said, "Those people don't work for us any more." [42] He spoke to me in early December about the "revolt of the FBI," adding grimly that this was something he would gladly occupy himself with in the next eleven months.[43]

Kennedy never forgot the coldness with which Hoover had broken the news from Dallas. "It wasn't the way that, under the circumstances, I would have thought an individual would talk. That was one thing. Then I knew that within a few days he was over to the White House giving dossiers on everyone that President Kennedy had appointed, in the White House particularly . . . with the idea that President Kennedy had appointed a lot of . . . rather questionable figures." In his talk with Johnson after the address to Con-

gress, Kennedy had warned that the FBI was operating once again as an independent agency. "I said I thought it was a major mistake because I thought that they should have some control over the FBI. . . . His response was mostly that it wasn't going on and that he wanted me to control the Department of Justice." Kennedy rejoined that they both "knew what was going on and that . . . if I had just been appointed Attorney General, I would resign." However, if he did, "it would be considered that I was getting out for a different reason. So that wouldn't do any good; and I was going to accept that relationship through the year; and then I'd get out." Johnson repeated that "that wasn't really the situation that existed, that J. Edgar Hoover never came to him directly. But that wasn't the truth." [44]

Kennedy's friends kept him informed about the reports Hoover pressed on the President; as, for example,

> that the Attorney General's people at the Department of Justice are holding secret meetings to try to play up the Bobby Baker case "in order to cause you embarrassment so that you'll have to take the Attorney General on the ticket." . . . [Ethel Kennedy] is alleged to have said that the FBI is out there [at Hickory Hill] not checking the phones [for wiretaps] but are putting wiretaps in so Lyndon Johnson can listen.[45]

> McNamara used to tell me that Hoover used to send over all this material on me and that Lyndon Johnson would read it to him. Lyndon Johnson told me that he never received an adverse report from J. Edgar Hoover on me. One time McNamara had a dinner at Nick Katzenbach's house to talk about their children taking a bicycle ride through Cape Cod. . . . Hoover sent a report in to Lyndon Johnson that there was a meeting—I think I was supposed to have been there—at this house in which we were discussing the overthrow of Lyndon Johnson, to take the nomination from him. Or like Abba Schwartz reported to have said at some party, "We've got to get rid of Lyndon Johnson so that Robert Kennedy can become President." . . . Lyndon Johnson says that he never received such a report.[46]

While thus feeding the new President's suspicions, the director at the same time protested to him about, as Kennedy heard it, "a conspiracy, led by me, to get rid of J. Edgar Hoover." [47] Johnson's response to Kennedy's criticisms of the FBI, or so Hoover told an interviewer in 1970, was: "Stand by your guns." As for Hoover himself: "I didn't speak to Bobby Kennedy the last six months he was in of-